

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS" -- INTRO -- PLEASE READ (these notes for the JPG image files set)

"RAIL TRAVEL NEWS" (originally "Rail Travel Newsletter") was a small, *very* independent, printed news periodical about train travel, primarily covering the US but with good coverage of Canada as well, plus some coverage of Europe. It first came out in December, 1970, prior to the advent of "Amtrak" -- the national, consolidated operation of the remaining (and previously operated by the private railroad companies) passenger train network in the US -- which debuted in May 1971. The designated Amtrak system started out utilizing passenger train equipment inherited from the original railroads. That included stations, crews, and rail routes which had been run for decades by the various US railroad corporations. To put it mildly, the new "Amtrak" had startup problems. This publication followed the growing new system in detail.

Finding information: I am thrilled to announce that we now have an actual **DATABASE / INDEX for all the issues here in this file!** Thanks to the amazing efforts of Jay Virts, also a resident here in L.A., we have accompanying a genuine spreadsheet which works with most operating systems, using either Microsoft Excel or Libre Office Spreadsheet (Calc), and displays the contents in incredible detail, such that you should be able to search and find most anything you'd like to research here. I can't thank Jay enough for his assistance, but you'll be among his fans as you see how thorough the indexing is! (It is listed as "RTN database")

History of the publication:

As mentioned, the first issue of Rail Travel Newsletter [familiarily, "RTN"] came out in Dec. 1970. The publication ran through to a final issue # 662, dated May, 2004 -- although that final one didn't show up in subscribers' mailboxes until August of that year, reflecting a perennial problem that RTN suffered: adhering to his intensive (but challenging) 2x-per-month schedule. The whole time, it was inexpensively produced, primarily put out through the

efforts of one guy in Berkeley, Calif., Edward J. Malmstrom, Jr. He used a *nom-de-plume*, "James Russell", in his capacities as both Editor & Publisher. He soon attracted a wide range of contributors, including myself.

What is in this set:

The state of this collection consists, at this moment, of a total of 331 issues, out of some 662 that compromise the full lifespan of the publication, so it's half the issues. I *thought* that I had *all* the issues stored at home (since, after all, I was a staff member!), but once I started scanning, I discovered two huge gaps: #1) starting in Aug., 1984 (at issue # 297), resuming in Oct., 1996 with issue # 556 -- approx. 10 years worth *gone*!

Then major gap #2) starting in September 1997 (at issue # 574) and resuming in Oct. 2001 with issue # 640, a gap of about 4 years. I have no idea where the missing years of issues went; they may still be here here at my home, but I sure can't find them! If other issues become known to me, and can be available to scan, we can look into that. (The California State Railway Museum, in Sacramento, CA, has quite a collection of RTNs, but they don't loan them out for scanning by others. Maybe some year they'll make more issues available.)

What you see here now are JPG "image" copies of the available files. I originally scanned them this way, an individual JPG image of each page. As you may read in these pages elsewhere, due to the occasional rather variable printing quality, occasional pages may repeat, at different contrast or brightness levels, in order to attempt to show the images (or the text) to best advantage, and that sometimes required 2 different scanner settings. These are not errors, just my efforts to make sure that, in the future, the contents can be seen as well as can be presented via the technology I have in 2021 and 2022. Additionally, I'm attempting to compensate for the fact the the viewing/reading conditions may vary widely, depending on the technology being used for the viewing.

I have located some issues to fill in the early gaps. Specifically, the several missing issues in the first 310 or so, and I expect that rather soon I'll have the set complete to the end of 1984, circa issue (whole number) ~310.

If I can manage to add these a *second* time, as another *separate* set of files, you should *also* be able to find all the extant issues of RTN as converted PDFs of all the scans. These PDFs might provide simpler viewing for you, depending on your system, the display program utilized, and the settings of the monitor itself.

As you are going through these issues: please be aware that there *may* be multiple scans of certain pages: high contrast, low contrast, and in-between. In a very few instances, it was just so marginal (or the inking of the page was not balanced), and none of my scanning tricks would really bring the type out. So, if (when) you encounter these repeating pages, please just remember that it's been done to enable the best kind of copying reproduction I could manage.

Tip 1: Starting in issue #17, there was a recurring department of each RTN, "Mixed Train of Thoughts". It's the catchall - general chat feature that was wildly assorted and full of misc. late-breaking information. All of it was reported very briefly, so we couldn't really summarize it in the database. Suffice to say, if you know the date of some kind of event that happened, even approximately, check out MTOT in those issues to see if it was covered. Otherwise, it's just interesting reading, with reporting on all manner of developments about passenger trains as they evolved under the aegis of Amtrak.

Tip 2: If you're completely new to RTN, be sure to check out "The Adventures of Captain Amtrack", a noirish-style cartoon graphic feature that ran in a few issues (#12 - #21) in mid-1971. I thought it was a lot of fun, but the artist who drew it (Michael Cohen) somehow lost his motivation for doing it, plus the Editor felt devoting 2 full pages in each issue for such fictional material was taking away too much needed space from news, photos, and

in-person articles. So, sadly, that series came to an early conclusion.

How I got involved:

I [Paul Rayton, of Los Angeles, Calif.] learned about the imminent initial publication of RTN in 1970 from some source -- can't remember what -- toward the end of 1970, and figured it would be good to subscribe, so I was "on board" from Vol. 1, No.1. For one thing, I had intensively traveled a good number of the remaining US passenger trains in the timeframe of 1969-1971, sampling the services, such as they were, on the various passenger trains right then, at the very end of the corporate railroad passenger train era. (Students of the history of railroad passenger service will know about the ~century-long developments of such "train" services, which started from very early horse-drawn carriages to the luxury "streamliners" which came on scene post-WW2. Those streamliners probably represented the highest achievement in the design & operations of railroad passenger services, at least considering the technologies available for the design, manufacture and operation of such railway equipment as of the 1940s and early 1950s.)

RTN began publication, and it soon enough struck me that I might have something to offer. In early 1971, when RTN was only ~2 months old, I sent a letter to the Editor with my evolving proposal to supply some reviews of the final "corporate" trains, cheekily suggesting that "I might be the next Lucius Beebe." [If you're not familiar with Lucius Beebe, see:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucius_Beebe ; Beebe was a fan of rail travel, a *bon vivant* & writer/columnist. He was often credited with the quote, "Bless me! This is pleasant, riding on the rail!"

Link accessed OK as of Jan., 2022] One other *bon vivant* well known for his escapades on the trains of the era was one Rogers E. M. Whitaker, who wrote under his nom-de-plume, E. M. Frimbo. [Info about Whitaker:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rogers_E._M._Whitaker , accessed OK Jan., 2022]

Like the gentlemen I sought to emulate, I'd ridden the trains with an especial attention to the *service(s)*, and not so much simply the hardware of the operations. I knew that the historic passenger trains of the United States were an "endangered species" by that point (1970 or so). Railroads were eliminating services, posting "train-off" notices with the Interstate Commerce Commission (seeking to discontinue the operations), and some other more devious tricks -- on certain railroads -- such as managing to habitually run late. I myself was interested in the economic and societal forces which were leaving the deluxe trains in the dustbin of history. I never did achieve the level of acclaim (or notoriety) of either of those oversized personalities mentioned above, but I did have a unique opportunity & perspective to experience a few of the final gasps of the legendary era.

The Editor (of RTN) was intrigued enough by my proposal that he did invite my participation, and I promptly started writing some columns. Before too long, he'd raised my status, appointing me as "Editor-at-Large", and I carried that title all the way until the end, even though my contributions by that time had diminished to almost nothing other than sending along occasional articles from the Los Angeles *Times* and other major national publications. You will find articles from me, esp. in the first several years of publication, as well as a bunch of various photos. The photo reproduction was never great, but it was nice to see them in a public forum.

Truth be told I've come to believe, now some 50+ years after the fact, that one of my colleagues at RTN, Mr. Glenn Lee, was actually a better writer than me; his articles were consistently well done and interesting, and filled with interesting tidbits of info. You should be able to search the index for Glenn Lee articles (and mine), as well as of a couple of the other stalwarts during the years RTN was published. Sadly, virtually all of them have passed away. Many of the long-time contributors that I searched for online were, as of early 2022, already sadly deceased, or at least I couldn't track them down.

What I hope to add in the future:

As noted above, if some of the missing issues are made available to me in the future, I'd consider adding them, assuming I still have an operable scanner, and am physically able. I'm no spring chicken now (will be 80 in 2022) so I'm not as nimble as I used to be (!). Doing this initial ~330 issues was a very labor-intensive process, so I might also be willing and able to farm it out. Anyway, as new issues are added, I'll make an effort to remember to update this message here.

Also: many of "my" review articles (of the pre-Amtrak trains) were printed by Ed. in a super-small typeface, and/or almost illegible because of printing issues. I guess readers at the time made their way through them OK, because they occasionally responded to what I wrote (in the "Letters" department), and amazingly, I never saw any beefs about the fonts used. In any event, as I do actually hope to compile them into a compilation book of some kind -- time willing -- with additional visuals, graphics, and period photos, I will attempt to add to any issue which has one of my "reviews" an appendix containing a version of the article in a less-frustrating typeface and size. I may try OCR to capture the articles, so I can "copy" them without actually having to re-type the entire thing. Again, if I manage to do this, I will try to remember to update this message here.

Geeky comments about the scanning & printing:

Also referenced above, the publication was produced on the proverbial "shoestring", so there were occasional problems with the printing. At an early point, Mr. Editor invested in a printing press of some sort that he could operate at home. Doing so would save on costs at local printing shops, but there were several rather sloppy issues sent out as he went through a bit of a learning curve early on. Gradually, the reproduction improved, but it was never like a full-on, glossy-paper magazine, so apologies in advance for some of the limitations of these scans. I did them with various scanners, and some help from some other friends who got "drafted" into doing some of the scanning for me -- and it was a massive project, even at just 325 issues!

During the course of the scanning, I attempted to smooth out many of the aforementioned variations in printing by adjusting the brightness and contrast of the individual scanned pages. In some instances, if looking in "list" view of the JPG image files, you may see cryptic notations like "[c.'2b']" Those were internal reminders to me as to which of the scanning parameters I utilized for said page. The numbering, *per se*, wouldn't have any significance for you, the reader, since it was associated with my scanner at home. It has no other significance, other than, should return to re-scan it later, to serve as a reminder of the parameters initially used.

The Editor liked to liven up the appearance sometimes by printing on to colored paper of various hues. So, if you can't read something at first, check the full file to see if there are any included alt scans of the page in question. The "color" printing was for the colorful graphics he could produce using the paper of different hues, not so much the photographic quality. The dyes used to color the *paper* didn't always translate to a successful match in the scanned copies, and the registration of the printing wasn't pinpoint precise, so the results vary quite a bit. I'll give him kudos for some really intriguing design & artwork in the covers. He wasn't a graphic designer by trade, but he came up with a lot of clever color combinations and graphically-interesting layouts. (There is a side gallery of some of my more favorite RTN covers, included in the set.)

Throughout the scanning, a key goal of mine was to retain the "flavor" of the publication, as much as possible. That includes the quirky color papers he (the Editor) often used as the outer cover page. So ... it was a challenge. But I maintained that essential flavor and essence of that quirkiness, although I have occasionally also included a monochrome (black & white) scan of certain problematic pages, if it would increase readability.

As I load this online now, in mid-March of 2022, there are a few issues which may still be less-than-ideal in scan quality. So, should you spot an issue in which the contrast is quite low, it *may*

subsequently get slightly improved, but don't count on it! And even that re-scan will only allow improvement subject to the limits of the original printing quality! The variation was so dramatic, in some issues, that certain opposing pages would be of *radically* different quality, and that was really tough to scan and retain best legibility overall.

It's also possible to improve the exposure and contrast, after the fact, using some image-manipulation programs, if you are familiar with any of them. To do those, these JPGs are a much better choice than trying to "adjust" the PDFs. I'll mention one such program, known as the "GNU Image Manipulation Program". There is also a photo editor in Microsoft Office 2010, both of which can be used free. It will take you a bit of time to learn how to operate them, but wonders can be worked. Do NOT try to adjust the "live" JPG images on the site -- download them off, and then work on them at your convenience at home!) There is, of course, also the well-known Photoshop, but I'm not personally acquainted with using that program.

The contents of this "archive":

I've prepared two versions of these issues available here, these original JPG images of the individual pages, as well as a set of PDF versions of every available single issue. I did have ~50% of the issues, and those are what you find available here; if you have one of the missing issues, discover a page missing or other technical error, or have **other comments or questions**, please **contact** me at <rtn_legacy@yahoo.com> (not using the "<" and ">" marks). As long as I'm alive and functioning, I'll try to get back to you to see about adding the missing issue(s). If I've moved on to the great dining car in the sky, I hope I'll have been able to pass the baton on to another caretaker of this legacy.

I should add that I was the listed copyright holder for the various articles published under my byline, so those are included here with my obvious permission. The balance of the content of the issues were listed as © Message Media Co., that being the official working name of the publisher of RTN. The Editor (Ed Malmstrom,

a/k/a "James Russell", who was really the sole owner & operator of "Message Media") died in early 2018; I know of no other entity that has expressed any interest in the continuing ownership of all the RTN legacy and its contents, and his family has expressly informed me of their disinterest. Therefore, as one of the only remaining original RTN staffers, I'm presiding over the "official archives", such as they are. I'm also assuming the contents (other than my own writings and photos) are all public domain at this point in time. **I make this material available with no intention of usurping anyone's otherwise-expressed ownership or copyright; this is all posted solely for the historic record it contains, and on a not-for-profit basis.**

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